MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER
DEI 1.0 EVALUATION

M
DIVERSITY,
EQUITY &
INCLUSION

UNIT REFLECTIONS

Graham Sustainability Institute

People: Lessons Learned

What are some lessons learned from engaging in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, specific to recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse community? In your response, please prioritize the most significant lessons learned, although we welcome reflection on lessons learned of any magnitude.

Over the course of DEI 1.0, Graham has adopted many strategies and tactics in the recruitment of new staff members as well as students to our programs that we will continue to use indefinitely. We have also realized that we must fundamentally and continually adjust our recruitment strategy to diversify our constituency. We have begun that process, starting to change how we conduct recruitment outreach and what information we ask of applicants, among other things. We continue to provide new employees with information about DEI resources and maintain a dedicated section on both our website and our intranet to house these resources. In addition, we now make intentional efforts to get pertinent resources directly into the hands of those who can use them by sending attachments and links via email, leveraging our internal newsletter, and regularly discussing ongoing and emerging DEI opportunities in staff meetings. By strongly encouraging all staff to engage in DEI-focused training and activities on an ongoing basis, we believe we have achieved a shared understanding of the principles of DEI and a shared commitment to advancing them.

We will continue to help staff prioritize DEI activities despite competing priorities. Asking prospective staff members and program participants to share their DEI-related perspectives and experiences as part of the application process sends a strong signal that DEI is important to Graham. New hires and program admits are not surprised to find that DEI considerations come up regularly at Graham.   We have found that students—whether interns or program participants—welcome the opportunity to share their ideas and perspectives around diversity, equity, and inclusion. They also welcome training. By integrating DEI considerations into the onboarding process, students and other constituencies know that Graham invites their active participation in the institute's advancement of DEI.

People: Best Practices

What best practices emerged from engaging in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, specific to recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse community?

As mentioned, we have implemented many successful tactics that we will continue indefinitely. Those include the following:

- ●Lengthening the period of time applications are open for jobs, scholarships, fellowships, grants, and other opportunities, thereby letting word of these opportunities reach broader audiences.
- ●Including our DEI statement on all applications and requesting that candidates share their own DEI experiences and perspectives as part of the application process.
- ●Encouraging staff members to spend time on DEI activities and helping them prioritize those activities within their workload.
- ●Coaching and mentoring students and full-time staff on career development by suggesting professional development opportunities and sharing resources like U-M's Career Navigator.
- ●Making sure that Graham's policies, including the conflict resolution policy, are updated regularly and are known and understood by staff members.
- ●Regularly reviewing recruitment materials to make sure they are welcoming, inclusive, and reflective of the diverse community we aspire to be.

In addition, we have come to appreciate the importance of tailoring our overall recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, we have tried to remove application barriers that aren't relevant to the particular opportunity, such as technology barriers. While we encourage applicants to apply for opportunities online through our website, we accept other modes of application as needed.

Another advancement in our strategy is to be present and accessible where our prospective applicants can be found, rather than requiring them to come to us. This has manifested as targeted outreach, peer-to-peer outreach, attendance at public events, and innovative marketing. We will build on this in DEI 2.0.

We also have begun to tailor DEI training materials for staff to our specific work. For example, we now have resources on reducing implicit bias in the grant-awarding process, which we did not have at the beginning of DEI 1.0.

People: Pitfalls to Avoid

Based on your unit's engagement in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, what are possible pitfalls to avoid in the future, specific to recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse community?

Upon reflection, we recognize ways that we can augment our data collection and benchmarking activities to help us better understand the impact of our efforts. As a small unit, it can be challenging to collect useful data without compromising anonymity or confidentiality. In DEI 1.0, to maintain confidentiality, we sacrificed a degree of granularity in our data. As a result, our measures of progress are not precise enough to be optimally useful and instructive. In the future, we will aim to share learnings with other small units and find innovative ways to capture data more comprehensively without invading privacy.

In addition, with a robust student intern program, it is challenging to ensure that every intern understands and has a chance to participate in Graham's DEI activities. We have begun to look at ways to ensure that all interns can have a voice in our DEI efforts. The DEI activity self-reporting tool we developed for staff members' use was not widely adopted. We will try to understand the barriers to

uptake and devise ways to reconfigure the tool or otherwise remove those barriers. Lastly, lack of financial resources is always a potential barrier.

People: Priorities for DEI 2.0

Based on your unit's engagement in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, please share any initial thoughts about priorities for DEI 2.0, specific to recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse community?

These are preliminary potential goals and action items for DEI 2.0, based on our experiences and learnings from DEI 1.0, as well as learnings from other units' DEI 1.0 goals and experiences.

- ● Increase the diversity of those working with Graham as long-term and short-term staff, students participating in our programs and in internships and part-time positions, faculty, visiting scholars and fellows, contractors, partners, and advisors.

  - ○ Proactively cultivate a diverse pool of potential collaborators by linking to, among others, identity-focused networks of sustainability scholars and professionals along with external partners who engage with and/or serve the needs of under-resourced communities.

  - ○ As opportunities at all levels open, seek a diverse applicant pool by using targeted job posting strategies and resources, along with our internal and external networking systems and groups.

  - ○ Advance our holistic, individualized approach to application review. Train reviewers to be aware of permissible considerations while uniformly consider the DEI response in evaluating candidates. ○ Develop a process for tracking and analyzing applicant demographic data without compromising anonymity or confidentiality.

  - ○ Identify key aptitude, attitudes, skills and experience that would help us achieve increased diversity in staff over time. ○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

- ● Engage in retention practices that center DEI considerations.

  - ○ Create an ongoing staff engagement program to ensure that staff members are engaged with unit goals, setting personal goals in partnership with supervisors, and receiving positive and constructive feedback that helps grow their skills and career. ○ Include DEI action items in individual and team work plans.

  - ○ Create incentives and recognition for staff who take the initiative to devise novel, effective ways to promote DEI in their work processes.

  - ○ Continue to refine approaches to introduce DEI agenda items in staff training and communications.

  - ○ Support high-quality professional development and other learning opportunities to encourage the professional growth of all staff and strengthen performance throughout the office.

  - ○ Issue leadership communications that encourage professional development.

○ Make a small suite of professional development opportunities available to all interested staff.

○ Continue to tie DEI into professional development in individually meaningful ways.

○ Consider developing a staff mentoring program that pairs new employees with seasoned employees to assist in career advancement and professional development.

○ Continue to provide staff with opportunities to participate in professional speaking, writing, presentation, and other opportunities to grow their careers and enhance the field of sustainability.

○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

● Work to remove structural barriers and facilitate a vibrant, dynamic, and diverse community, with a focus on developing a high-quality experience for all constituents, a sense of belonging, and a culture of collaboration.

○ Continually update application requirements and processes to ensure an ever more inclusive and equitable approach to community-building.

○ Engage in recruiting and hiring practices that maximize the diversity of the applicant pool, minimize the micro aggressions candidates may inadvertently experience during the interview process, and minimize the impact of implicit biases on hiring decisions. Stay abreast of best practices in this area and identify opportunities to expand awareness of these topics and discuss their importance at one or more meeting(s) of program leads.

○ Regularly engage current staff in conversations about recruiting and hiring criteria and involve DEI leads in job searches.

○ Circulate job postings among audiences likely to result in a diverse pool of applicants.

○ In addition to including Graham's DEI statement in applications, explicitly state that we welcome applications from individuals who are part of groups historically underrepresented in higher education.

○ Monitor, document, and update best practices that promote diverse applicant pools.

○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

Process: Lessons Learned

What are some lessons learned from engaging in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process specific to creating an inclusive and equitable campus climate? In your response, please prioritize the most significant lessons learned, although we welcome reflection on lessons learned of any magnitude.

Integrating DEI discussions into all staff meetings and including updates in all staff newsletters have been tremendously helpful in keeping DEI considerations top-of-mind for staff. The lesson learned is that consistency is key in creating an inclusive and equitable climate. COVID has definitely made this more difficult, even more so as we moved from a fully remote to a hybrid environment. A silver lining of COVID is that we learned how different our personal situations are, so there is no one-size-fits-all way to

create a sense of inclusion and equity. The key is for supervisors to check in regularly with staff to tailor recognition and accommodations to their individual situations.

Publicly celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusion has been another way for Graham to enhance our work climate. Given the staff-wide emphasis on DEI described above, we can all share in the feelings of gratification when we demonstrate our efforts on our website and in other public-facing communications and outreach. Our DEI storytelling enhances our impact, and we will continue to build on that aspect of our communications in DEI 2.0. One more key lesson learned is that we at Graham, with support from the U-M community, are positioned to set an example with our external partners of how to apply a DEI lens to sustainability challenges. We have incorporated this priority into our institute strategic plan.

Process: Best Practices

What best practices emerged from engaging in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, specific to creating an inclusive and equitable campus climate?

As mentioned, regular check-ins with staff have emerged as a best practice in maintaining an inclusive and equitable climate. In addition, providing training materials specific to staff members' needs, such as information on planning diverse and inclusive events, has had a positive effect on our climate overall. Graham continues to strive for (and achieve) ever greater excellence in collaboration—a goal that does not cause but does correlate with fostering an inclusive and equitable climate. Graham staff are encouraged to engage in self-assessment, identifying their own strengths and areas of potential improvement. With DEI as a stated priority for Graham and an explicit part of our mission, this culture of self-improvement extends to skills and knowledge around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Planet Blue Ambassador Program and the Student Sustainability Coalition are two programs hosted by Graham that reach broadly across the entire U-M community. Our deep integration of DEI principles into the content of those two programs ensures that thousands of U-M community members experience the intersection of DEI and sustainability. We will continue to refine the DEI content of those two programs and provide the necessary resources for that purpose.

Partnering with other units and with ODEI is an important way for Graham to multiply our efforts. As a small unit with relatively few resources, our impact is greatly increased when we can pool our investments of time, talent, and funding with others. We will continue to leverage U-M and unit-level DEI resources to extend our reach.

Process: Pitfalls to Avoid

Based on your unit's engagement in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, what are possible pitfalls to avoid in the future, specific to creating an inclusive and equitable campus climate?

One potential pitfall for Graham is a lack of bandwidth, especially (ironically) with respect to siloing our efforts. For example, if one program area in Graham gains experience with a DEI effort, ideally everyone across Graham and beyond could learn from that experience. In actuality, that happens much but not all of the time. Relatedly, if we lack marketing "assets,"such as photographs, then it becomes difficult to tell

our stories on our website or social media. In our DEI 2.0 strategic plan, we will work to anticipate and avoid missing potential opportunities to share our work amongst ourselves and more broadly.

Another potential pitfall is not collecting the right data to measure our results. We have already discussed data collection here and that will be a focus of DEI 2.0.

As well, lack of funding to act on promising ideas can be a significant pitfall.

One last potential pitfall would be not tailoring our efforts to increase inclusivity and equity to our specific constituents, as those concepts mean different things to different people. We can mitigate that risk by being transparent about what we're doing and seeking input from our constituents about how well our efforts are working and what else we might try.

Process: Priorities for DEI 2.0

Based on your unit's engagement in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, please share any initial thoughts about priorities for DEI 2.0, specific to creating an inclusive and equitable campus climate?

These are preliminary potential goals and action items for DEI 2.0, based on our experiences and learnings from DEI 1.0 as well as learnings from other units' DEI 1.0 goals and experiences.

● Create an inclusive, welcoming environment with collegial relationships and interactions at all levels. Monitor potential climate issues and proactively resolve DEI-related issues.

   ○ Continue to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion as vital components of the institute's ethos.

   ○ Enrich our understanding of identity at Graham. Advance DEI initiatives with a sensitivity to the varied and sometimes contradictory experiences of identity.

   ○ Consider expanding opportunities for informal engagement among constituents, including connecting current program participants with past participants (alumni) and connecting staff with a diversity of stakeholders and mentors.

   ○ Identify specific staff members who can act as a resource for any constituent who experiences discrimination or insensitive remarks.

   ○ Create visual signals and cues in Graham's spaces that reflect our commitment to DEI. Share digital and social content that represents our diversity in photos, text, events, and more.

   ○ Ensure that accessibility best practices are incorporated into onboarding and continued training all staff and that communications and event-planning staff receive relevant training around accessibility issues specific to their work.

   ○ Improve equity sensitivity among staff.

   ○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts

● Proactively support cross-campus efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at U-M.

   ○ Evaluate the feasibility of participating formally in the annual MLK symposium.

   ○ Consider facilitating discussions around DEI in sustainability for the campus community.

○ Work collaboratively and cooperatively with campus and external partners—especially fellow small, non-academic units—to grow DEI programming, share resources, and provide mutual support. ○ Collaborate with university partners such as the Office for Institutional Equity, Services for Students with Disabilities, and the Spectrum Center to increase awareness and education about diverse cultural groups, identities, and disabilities.

○ Collaborate with university partners like UMS to increase community access to sustainability engagement opportunities.

○ Partner visibly in the U-M's diversity, equity, and inclusion outreach efforts. ○ Elevate the visibility of all our DEI-focused collaborations.

○ Improve methods for collecting, vetting, integrating, and reporting feedback from the campus community.

○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

● Effectively convey our commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion to all of our stakeholders.

○ Provide resources and facilitation for Culture Club to develop key messages around DEI action planning.

○ Develop other ways to present the ODEI strategy and Graham's DEI plans in formats that are easily digestible for staff and advisors.

○ Consider updating our diversity statement or replacing it with a definition of excellence in DEI efforts.

○ Support and prepare program managers with the skills needed to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion with staff and constituents.

○ Build out communication and feedback loop mechanisms between Graham's leadership team and Culture Club.

○ Develop a communications plan for responding to societal issues.

○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

● Identify a range of opportunities for staff to engage more deeply with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, anti-racism, and working across differences.

○ Increase staff awareness of diverse groups and identities using videos, activities, and icebreakers from the DEI toolkit at staff meetings to help staff communicate their backgrounds and experiences effectively.

○ Maintain the expectation that understanding DEI issues and gaining workplace skills to use that knowledge are part of staff development.

○ Develop DEI learning themes that align with Graham's strategic plan.

○ Starting with Culture Club, explore where we might be inadvertently perpetuating white supremacy-related concepts in the projects we work on and in the ways we do our work. ○

Consider having staff involved in hiring complete STRIDE training offered through ADVANCE (https://advance.umich.edu/stride/).

○ Engage students in understanding what it means to join a diverse, interdisciplinary academic community like the Graham Scholars or Dow Fellows.

○ Consider leveraging the Michigan Expectations Model (https://hr.umich.edu/sites/default/files/final_mem.pdf) or a similar framework to help develop the capacity of our community members (broadly defined) to contribute to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community at Graham and within their sustainability efforts outside of Graham.

○ Consider selecting, with staff input, at least one community engagement effort in which Graham can participate as an office. ○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

● Develop regular processes for monitoring, assessing and continually improving perceptions of the workplace climate at Graham, along with experiences of staff, students, faculty, partners, and advisors.

○ Regularly review data from exit interviews for insights about climate.

○ Design methods to capture anonymous DEI-related feedback (requests/suggestions/concerns) from Graham staff and constituents.

○ Evaluate typical, repeated Graham processes through a DEI lens: applying, using the website, navigating participation in our programs and grants, etc.

○ Continue to conduct periodic salary equity reviews.

○ Consider analyzing staff salaries and promotions with race, gender, and other demographic factors explicitly included.

○ Consider analyzing spending and other internal metrics with race, gender, and other demographic factors explicitly included.

○ Determine how to best assess diversity, equity, and inclusion beyond gender and racial categorization. In addition, build a robust and complete set of metrics with an established standardized methodology for the repeated collection and analysis of data relevant to the reporting and evaluation of Graham's DEI-related efforts and activities. This could include evaluating the change in staff's aggregate DEI competency. This might also include capturing a range of qualitative data. We might consider conducting surveys that measure Graham's perceived accessibility and relevance on campus over time.

○ Budget appropriately to support these efforts.

Products: Lessons Learned

What are some lessons learned from engaging in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, specific to supporting innovative and inclusive scholarship, teaching, research, and/or service? In your response, please prioritize the most significant lessons learned, although we welcome reflection on lessons learned of any magnitude.

Writing these priorities into the institute's strategic plan and mission have been crucial in directing our work. When financially feasible, it is worthwhile to have staff dedicated to advancing our DEI work.

Products: Best Practices

What best practices emerged from engaging in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, specific to supporting innovative and inclusive scholarship, teaching, research, and/or service?

Supporting formal DEI roles on the Student Sustainability Coalition has paid dividends. The students, who serve in a coordinating role for student sustainability efforts across campus, are rising to this challenge and devising highly innovative, effective ways to promote DEI in their work. Tailoring DEI resources to staff needs is a worthwhile, albeit time-consuming, practice that we will continue.

Products: Pitfalls to Avoid

Based on your unit's engagement in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, what are possible pitfalls to avoid in the future, specific to supporting innovative and inclusive scholarship, teaching, research, and/or service?

Anonymous surveys and questionnaires, while helpful, don't yield the richly instructive information that comes from discussions. We will examine whether the resources we spend to collect feedback and input on our DEI efforts are being used in the most effective ways.

Products: Priorities for DEI 2.0

Based on your unit's engagement in DEI 1.0 and the unit self-evaluation process, please share any initial thoughts about priorities for DEI 2.0, specific to supporting innovative and inclusive scholarship, teaching, research, and/or service?

These are preliminary potential goals and action items for DEI 2.0, based on our experiences and learnings from DEI 1.0 as well as learnings from other units' DEI 1.0 goals and experiences.

● Diversify the community of U-M scholars who partner with Graham.

○ Make sure Graham RFPs are promoted to faculty in units that actively seek to increase diversity in academia.

○ Consider explicitly promoting environmental justice and anti-racism in some RFPs.

○ Seek guidance from units on campus that support faculty with diverse perspectives or promote greater diversity in academia (e.g., NCID, CEW+, ADVANCE) to better understand the needs of faculty from marginalized groups.

○ Provide guidance to reviewers around unconscious biases related to scholarship type (e.g., legitimacy/importance of research on race and gender questioned across disciplines) that impact nominations, evaluations, and awards and that are often correlated with scholar demographics.

○ Ensure other practices around reviewing funding decisions and award nominations and outcomes are designed to reduce unconscious bias and thereby work to improve racial and gender diversity of grant/award nominations and awardees.

○ Further develop mechanisms like those implemented with CNAP and other RPFs to ensure that some staff and students can participate in grant opportunities.

○ Consider building a database of sustainability internship opportunities for students or otherwise servicing student scholars beyond our interns and program participants.

● Ensure that our programs and resources are accessible to as wide a range of potential partners as possible.

○ Evaluate Graham's network of internal and external partners to reveal potential gaps.

○ Use and regularly refresh guidelines and best practices for engaging diverse partners with the aim of increasing the diversity among our partners.

○ Increase surveying of internal and external stakeholders to gauge their satisfaction with their interactions with Graham and the services we provide.

○ Consider conducting a communication preference survey to make sure our content reaches our constituents in ways that work for them.

○ Evaluate meaningful ways to recognize and thank Graham's key partners, especially those who help advance our DEI efforts.

● Elevate voices and representation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community, among others, in sustainability.

○ Lead and partner in grant and project collaborations that elevate the concerns and celebrate the contributions of, among others, communities of color.

○ Review and adjust Graham's network of partners and stakeholders to promote broadly diverse representation.

○ Create translational science communications in the languages of the people most likely to use them and provide support for researchers to do the same.

○ Increase sponsorship and partnership with diversity-related external organizations.

● Commit to helping the university better understand DEI as it relates to sustainability.

○ Provide expertise in sustainability and collaborative research to campus partners who serve under-resourced constituencies, such as Poverty Solutions and the Urban Collaboratory.

○ Consider developing a train-the-trainer module on the intersection of DEI and sustainability.